
DE News



March 30, 2001 - Iowa Department of Education - Ted Stilwill, Director

From the Director's desk:

- ***Budget revisions from the Governor***
- ***Teacher quality***

As expected, this week's revised budget from the Governor calls for dramatic reductions in various state programs and services. The DE received a mixed bag of results. Highlights:

- State aid to schools will remain fully funded. State officials promised early on that K-12 education would be a high priority this year, and the budget recommendations have consistently reflected that commitment.
- Teacher compensation, the \$40 million promised earlier this legislative session will not be cut.
- A \$2.5 million increase from current year funding for community college general aid, rather than the previously proposed \$5 million.
- \$225,000 is proposed to fund pilot ESL programs at three community colleges.
- Community college vocational-technical technology would be funded by transferring \$2.5 million from the Accelerated Career Education (ACEs) program. The \$3 million current funding expires at the end of this fiscal year.
- Various college tuition grants would be funded at about 4% or \$2.7 million lower than originally recommended.
- IPTV would be reduced by nearly \$500,000, affecting its educational program feeds and digital TV operations.

- Most of the various DE grant programs would remain, but many of the awards would be reduced slightly.
- Many programs and services (such as the Jobs for American Grads program, for instance) would receive reductions up to 6% from original proposals.
- The DE administration budget would be cut by \$60,000, which we believe can be managed without layoffs.

The state's overall shortfall is \$285 million. The Governor hopes to make up for this by scaling back his spending recommendations by \$144 million and making about \$141 million in revenue adjustments, including the transfer of \$120 million from an economic emergency fund.

If you'd like more detail about the Governor's proposed budget, go to the Iowa Dept. of Management Web site: state.ia.us/government/dom.

Please note: These budget recommendations still need to be acted upon by the legislature, so they aren't final yet. I expect budget negotiations will be the top priority over the next few weeks, so we'll keep you updated.

Teacher quality

Lawmakers continue to meet and discuss how to reach consensus on the teacher quality proposal. Although the going may feel slow, I'm pleased with the progress -- especially in light of other significant issues (such as the budget) that also demand attention.

It does appear the “gaps” between the various proposals are narrowing. Talks will continue early next week, and a revised proposal may be ready in a couple weeks.

Remember, you can visit the DE Web site at www.state.ia.us/educate/ and click on the Teacher Quality headline to get more information about the various proposals.

The proposed funding allocations on the site are especially helpful. As we pointed out last week, the \$40 million set-aside will start to pay for national board certification; an induction/mentoring program, including training and paying mentors; variable pay; an evaluation program, including training for evaluators; increasing beginning teacher salaries toward a new minimum; and increasing career teacher salaries toward a new minimum.

Of the \$40 million, between \$27 million and \$31 million would be used specifically to increase salaries. Districts will receive their salary allocations according to a formula, which is based 50% on certified enrollment and 50% on number of teachers.

Please note that all participating districts will receive their allocation – even those that currently pay teachers more than the new minimums. Those districts would simply distribute their allocation differently among teachers.

Other legislation of interest

HF 576, which provides for certain school finance issues, including a 101% guarantee of the previous year’s regular program district cost, reorganization incentives, and student weighting at regional academies. In Ways & Means subcommittee.

SF 203, budget guarantee for FY02 and FY03. Passed Senate; in House Appropriations with a House Education Committee amendment that would strike

everything and insert HF 576 (see previous bill).

SF 348 (formerly SSB 1086), establishing charter schools. Passed Senate; in House Education Committee.

SF 197, extending the community college vocational-technical technology improvement program and appropriation (currently set to expire at the end of this fiscal year). Senate Appropriations subcommittee.

HF 674 (formerly HSB 218), establishing a process for voluntary AEA reorganization. Passed House; in Senate Education.

HF 670 (formerly HSB 236), allowing alternative licensure for K-12 administrators and teachers. On House calendar.

SF 480, requiring the Department to study elimination of community college licensure, including related issues of tenure. Passed Senate; in House Education.

SF 468, allowing schools to seek SBRC approval to use their unspent balance to pay for increased utility costs. On Senate calendar.

HF 660 (formerly HF 197), increasing the state sales and use tax by one cent, with the proceeds going to school infrastructure and property tax relief. In House Ways and Means.

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For more information about the Iowa Department of Education, grants, policies, programs, or links to other education web sites, visit the DE home page: www.state.ia.us/educate/.